DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 035 224 EF 003 762

AUTHOR	Marcase, Michael P.
TITLE	The Role of Community in Facilities Planning.
PUB DATE	Oct 69
NOTE	18p.; Speech presented at 46th Annual Meeting of Council of Educational Facilities Planners, Memphis, Tennessee
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.00
DESCRIPTORS	Community Action, Community Cooperation, *Community Involvement, *Community Role, *School Construction, *School Planning, Urban Education, *Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

The need for school construction in urban areas is discussed, emphasizing the involvement of lay persons in the community in the planning of new buildings. Urban school construction problems and some possible solutions are considered. Discussion is included of procedures and limitations pertaining to the involvement of the community as a whole in various aspects of the work of the school. School-community projects in Philadelphia are described. (FS)

ED035224

NATIONAL CONVENTION

COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLANNERS

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN FACILITIES PLANNING

Prepared and Delivered By
Michael P. Marcase
Associate Superintendent of Schools
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
October 9, 1969

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Introduction

With the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960, people of the cities generally looked to the Federal Government as a source of funds for creating new educational opportunities and a subsequent better way of life. However, the New Frontier soon faded into the Great Society and it became evident to many that politicians were hopelessly entangled in bureaucratic ineptitude. Commitments for the escalation of the Viet Nam war and the race to the moon consumed the major portion of available financial resources. The revived hopes and dreams of the impatient big city citizens were quickly stamped out and replaced by frustration and despair. It became obvious that for the foreseeable future, education would be assigned a low federal priority. Token aid was eventually provided; the bulk in the form of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1966. Titles I, II, and III of that act especially were applicable to the Public Schools. Initial funding of this federal legislation, however, was low and erratic. Compared to the intense needs, the funding was at best minimal. The ineptitude of a bureaucratic organization in administering the vast programs of E.S.E.A. at times left some programs dangling in mid-air for lack of funds and, in many cases, cut out entirely. This uncertainty diluted the effectiveness of emerging intensive learning programs and the insecurity of funds aimed at the so-called disadvantaged, eventually planted the seed of polarization and backlash. With lost faith in the Federal Government the frustrated city dweller turned to the local school district for positive action. Being close at hand, the

EF 003 762

school districts were expected to quickly develop a dynamic educational climate and schools soon became the only remaining hope for community improvement and social change as well.

From my point of view, the three top priorities in the cities today are the same as they were 15 years ago, jobs, homes, and schools, all in close order. However, rest assured that the people have changed. They have become insulated against the broken promises of politicians and bureaucratic organizations, which promised a better tomorrow. The people are rightfully demanding the better tomorrow now, and in addition, are expressing their general dissatisfaction with progress in general and with educational leaders as well. Further, they are willing to take great risks to achieve a better life and are quickly learning how to become part of the instrument that delivers the goods rather than the disorganized individual of the past.

Although physically close at hand, urban school districts must contend with the problem of distance in understanding. Too often the educational leaders tend to be so far removed from the action that they are frequently out of phase with the needs of the students they serve. This malady can be found not only in the central administrative offices, but also in most neighborhood schools. I feel that this disfunctioning of an organization is one contributing factor to the rise in militancy among lay people, students and teachers. School administrators have reacted to this situation by utilizing crisis management, i.e. administration by reaction instead of by action. This feeling of crisis management should be replaced by orderly short and long-range planning, planning that listens to the voices of the community and systematically develops a high level of trust. (Touching base will not do the job).

The School District of Philadelphia has, like many other school districts, felt the pain of student unrest and militancy. The prognosis is that there will be even more student unrest in the years to come, filtering down from the colleges to the high schools and even middle schools. The failure of the schools to keep up with the demands of the modern world have given impetus to student militancy.

In spite of the involved work that has been done in the area of human relations and civil rights in the last ten years, many urban communities find there is deep seated polarization of various segments of the community. Whether this polarization has evolved around city and suburban groups or various ethnic and racial groups within the city, the polarization is still there. This polarization prevents and inhibits various groups from working together effectively to solve community problems. The polarization of groups makes it all the more important that school personnel involve entire segments of the community in planning the educational program and the new facilities within that community.

In the urban areas of America, minority groups feel that they must have some control over the educative process of their youngsters. Their reasoning proceeds along this line, that education is the great equalizer, or at least contains the possibility of being the great equalizer for all people. Further, that education is the surest and fastest way for social and economic upward mobility. Assuming that these statements are true and there are sufficient studies to indicate that they are true, then it becomes crucial that the minority students receive the best possible education. Most minority groups have come to the conclusion that the educational program, as carried on in urban America today, is no longer relevant to their sons or daughters and that further continuation of this educational program,

as it is constituted today, seriously handicaps the possibility of upward movement for their children. Therefore, members of minority groups are very desirous to have some say in what the educational process will be for their child. Through participation in the work of the schools, these minority groups at least have an opportunity for some influence upon the decision makers within the School District.

Sincere involvement of community personnel in the planning for new buildings also means additional support for bond issues as well as support for the allocation of funds in operating budgets. It is considered a truism that people involved in projects will tend to support these projects. However, it is equally true that people who are involved in the planning of a new school building will tend to generalize their support to entire bond issues to provide the funds to construct buildings in other areas. Additionally, a large reservoir of support for increases in the operational budgets to further staff new facilities is engendered through involvement. If lay persons know the problems and identify with them, they can, in turn, become part of the solution. The lay community, however, needs information in order to identify problems and relate to them. This might be the most significant basis for community participation - that of developing lines of communications. By sincerely involving the community in the work of the school, lines of communication are opened and enhanced. These lines of communication can transfer vital data to decision makers within the School District in one direction and also transfer vital information concerning programs to the community in the other direction. Much information can be gathered by school personnel by having these lines of communication open.

Urban Problems

Some of the most pressing problems facing school districts in the urban area are: the community revolt against taxes, student alienation and militancy, deep seated polarization of various ethnic and racial groups, the backlash of various groups, general financial crisis now facing urban school districts, and of a physical nature, the availability or more often unavailability of school sites.

If this audience is representative of the school districts throughout the country, then over one-third of the people in the audience have felt the sting of either a bond issue or tax referendum failing at the polls. The percentage of defeats is increasing each year. The school bond election or tax referendum seems to be the most logical source for parents and taxpayers to vent their displeasure with the heavy tax burden created by the local, state and federal government or general displeasure with Board policies and professional leaders.

Concurrent with the polarization of attitudes in groups is the development of backlash on the part of ethnic and racial groups. This backlash can be manifested in a variety of ways and in some ways that are almost bizarre. A recent example of this would be the bond election in Philadelphia in which the white community did not support the bond issue while the black community complacently supported the bond election. The white community clearly recognized the need for schools in their areas as well as in other areas, yet their solid "no" vote indicated a spiteful backlash action. Backlash has been especially prevalent in the integrated areas and communities when picking sites for new schools. This form of backlash makes it extremely difficult for school employees to unite the community in the selection of a site.

Selection of sites in and of itself is a very severe problem for urban areas. Open space, of course, in a densely populated area is not available. Development of a site consequently means the demolition of housing or of tax ratables, both of which produce community problems. The School District is being forced to seek unique solutions to the acquisition of sites. The idea of developing an open site that can contain a school building and outdoor recreation areas in the heart of the area that it is to serve, is fast disappearing. Other solutions as high-rise schools, shared occupancy, and adaptation of existing buildings are some of the solutions to the site problem.

In addition to all of the above problems, all urban areas face a most crucial problem, a problem that threatens its very life. This is the problem of financial security. School districts in the urban area are taxed to the limit, and even taxing to the limit does not produce the income that is needed. Many school districts are now operating with deficit spending in their operational budgets. School districts in the urban area are feeling this squeeze between federal and state taxes. In the large urban areas, federal fiscal policy has a very definite bearing upon local fiscal policies. The uncertainty of federal money is one contributing factor to the financial squeeze. The lack of <u>sources</u> of tax funds on the local level and the pre-empting of tax funds by the federal level are other factors that contribute to the financial crisis of school districts.

Solutions to the above problems relating to the community level, however, can be derived by taking the extraordinary steps to establish <u>credibility</u> and a <u>high trust level</u> by truth, candor, and genuine involvement. Tell it like it is --- not the kind of token involvement that usually precedes school district employees

announcing to the community and the students what kind of programs will be initiated, and for whom, or where a building will be located, but rather the kind of involvement where the community helps to solve the problems, and to initiate programs.

There is a certain amount of risk that must be assumed when school employees work with school-community advisory committees, but it is imperative that this risk be taken, and that the risk be shared with the community. The risk, of course, is that of strong majority support for an untenable plan.

Limitations

There are many reasons for involving the community as a whole in various aspects of the work of the school, whether it be program development, goal delineation, or planning for a new school building. It is essential for the well-being of the School District to have involvement of the various communities in these projects. By the same token, it is also mandatory that certain limitations be placed upon the involvement of lay personnel in the matters of the School District. Educators must always keep in mind that the Board of Education can never subrogate its final responsibility in the decision-making process of the School District. The Board of Education is the regularly appointed or elected body that is charged with the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the School District. The State or Commonwealth holds this group responsible for the well-being and well functioning of the School District. Neither can the School District employees forget that the Board of Education holds them responsible and accountable for a job to be done. The community cannot assume the responsibility of the professionals employed by the Board. The professional person must be prepared to make proper recommendations to the Board that reflect community majority support and to be able to give the reasons for recommendations. Further, professionals should identify alternative actions and

their consequences and the reason for rejecting these alternatives. The members of the Board of Education and their employees should be ever mindful of these facts of life. This does not mean, however, that community involvement and participation is a sham, and that it is meant only to dupe people into supporting programs; quite the contrary. Decisions made are based upon information received from various sources and one of these sources, a very vital source, is the community. Thus, although the final authority for decisions in the School District are laid at the feet of the Board of Education, recommendations, advisements, and demands by staff and by lay personnel are the stuff from which decisions are made. But it is still necessary to early define the area of responsibility for the community participants because it is an easy misapprehension to believe that the community is the only arbiter of making decisions. Persons who are trained to be planners or administrators, or teachers most certainly are the ones most qualified to do the work of planning and teaching and administering. But, because of the reasons stated above, it is equally mandatory that the community be genuinely involved in the process of planning, educating, and administering. By working together with the community, considerable information can flow from the community directly to the School District and to the Board of Education. In essence, the community has a direct input into the decision making process by being involved in the work of the school. This involvement of the community can be enhanced by certain procedures such as allowing the advisory committee to prepare the agenda for meetings, to set meeting dates, and to elect a committee chairman. It is equally important to meet community committees on their home ground in the evenings as well as to invite them to your office. Procedural guidelines can also be developed with the school-community advisory committee. Participation guidelines should spell out the areas of involvement of the community as well as certain time milestones. It is

entirely possible to develop a simplified work flow chart for each project in conjunction with the members of the community so that projects can proceed in a timely fashion.

Involvement of political leaders as well as the community is extremely important. The ward leaders, councilmen, planning commission staff members, as well as other municipal officials, can add weight to decisions and provide needed expertise in the solution of problems. By involving these political leaders they may untangle some of the political knots for a successful solution, and at the same time, rightfully claim partial credit for the capital improvements. Conversely, lack of involvement of political leaders may delay the project. It is rather foolhardy to fly in the face of commitments made by political leaders. The technique is to involve them before they make commitments.

It is also practical, and in many cases desirable to use a charrette apprcach to the planning of new facilities. This approach brings together people from the community, the city, the school district, planners and architects to work intensively for the solution of a problem. In this free-wheeling, shirt-sleeve approach, all participants have an equal opportunity for an input into the solution of problems. The needed expertise for planning school facilities is available in a charrette and can serve the desires of the community expressed through lay participation.

In an urban area, it is critical that a school district work in conjunction with and in close cooperation with the City Departments for joint development and use of school facilities. Close cooperation with the municipal sector could also lead to the development of other community facilities such as libraries and child care centers. In cooperative projects with the city, administration and

community groups it is absolutely essential that a committed phasing approach be utilized along with master planning of the entire project so that the project will be completed on time and will not be delayed. It is entirely possible that other agencies can drag their feet in a project and thereby delay construction of a school. When the school is desperately needed in an area, other agencies and organizations should not be allowed to delay the entire project. By committed phasing of a project, the School District knows when the school building will be constructed and can plan accordingly.

Procedures

It is exceedingly difficult to obtain participation and involvement in the work of the schools in the urban areas because of the hugeness of the School District, the city administration, and the very immensity of life itself in an urban area. But this can never be an excuse for not obtaining community involvement and participation.

It is my contention that we have been quite successful in community participation and involvement in the City of Philadelphia in its most recent Capital Improvement Program. With this background, I would then like to examine the methods and structures by which one urban area, particularly Philadelphia, has been able to enlist community participation and involvement in the planning of new schools. In speaking about large urban areas, one must keep in mind that in spite of the fact that the city as a whole represents a large expanse of humanity, when we plan a school we are still dealing with an identifiable, viable community. This community considers its own boundaries and is polarized within its boundaries in the same manner as any identifiable community outside the city. One speaks of the Kensington

area, West Oak Lane, or certain other areas within the city as an identifiable community. These areas can be classified as a micro-society within the larger society. This definition of community, although not of the making of the School District, has helped the School District in planning its new schools. The School District has been able to enlist the support of people living in a community around a neighborhood school. No matter what the racial composition or the economic situation of the community constituents, the smaller community will work and rally around this school for an identifiable cause. Just as these micro-societies are part of a larger social organization, so the neighborhood school is part of a larger organization. Each neighborhood school, being a lower school, is contained with a feeder pattern for a middle school and progressively several middle schools are contained within the feeder pattern of one high school. These overlappings serve to form as a webb stretching from lower school to high school.

The City of Philadelphia is divided into eight separate school districts. Each district is headed by a district superintendent. Depending upon the school district, there may be from one to two new schools planned in each district. Each new high school involving its feeder pattern schools has a school-community advisory committee. These committees are constituted on a kindergarten through 12th grade basis. Each school, however, within the feeder pattern, is represented on the overall advisory committee. The district superintendents play a crucial role in the appointment of each school-community advisory committee. The work of the district superintendent in organizing a school-community committee is augmented by the office of Community Affairs and, of course, by his own local contacts within the immediate area. When these K-12 school-community advisory committees are constituted, every effort is made to secure a representative citizen participation unit. It is necessary,

in this respect, to utilize all of the resources of the district superintendent's office, the office of Community Affairs, the Home and School office, as well as other community participation agencies. The local program planner for each school plays a key part in informing the district superintendent of various workers and organizations that should have representation as a sub-group within the school-community advisory committee. This committee provides the basis for needed local community representation in all aspects of new school planning - site selection, educational program definition, school organization, personnel, staff development, and community liaison. This committee usually continues to operate throughout the entire planning period for a new school. The major thrust of this committee in the planning process for a new school would be in site selection and program definition. This committee can further extend itself into sub-committees to handle any special problem that may arise or it could be that this committee might sub-divide itself along the six major topics mentioned above, i.e., site selection, program definition, school organization, personnel, staff development and community liaison. It is essential, however, that limitations be spelled out before the advisory committee meets so that the expectations of the extent of their participation in the decision making process does not become inflated. It is the purpose of this committee to make recommendations concerning the type of program desirable for the students in the neighborhood and also to help in the identification of possible sites for these schools. The criteria for final selection of a site is jointly developed by school personnel and the school-community advisory committee and applied to all sites recommended by the community in order to ascertain the best site. The school-community advisory committee will then be in a good position to advance the final recommendation by a public appearance before the Board of Education.

Philadelphia Thrust

In 1966, the School District of Philadelphia committed itself to a $600,000,000 Capital Improvement Program to close the facility gap that existed in the city. This Capital Improvement Program is one-third complete with a total projection of 75 new schools in eight years. Contained within this program are many thrusts which include community participation in various ways and to various degrees. One such thrust is the use of multi-purpose development or shared occupancy. As you know, this means the development of housing, and/or commercial or industrial property over, under or alongside of school property. The school space hopefully contains the flexibility of being converted to other uses in the future. Investigations have been made for using the condominium approach which incorporates housing or other uses with school facilities in one structure or series of structures. Another approach is to buy or sell air rights. Either the school districts sell air rights over or under their school facilities or purchases air rights over impending commercial and industrial developments. To construct facilities the third approach would be where a developer builds school space in a development at predetermined prices and predetermined specifications and then sells or leases the school facility to the School District. A good example of this in Philadelphia is the Friends Select School in the Pennsalt Complex which is a combination school facility and a high rise office building. (The power of Eminent Domain gives our School District significant opportunities in this area).

The Parkway School has perhaps involved the immediate community more intimately than almost any other project. The Parkway School is a school without a physical building of its own. Its classes are held in various commercial and industrial spaces or municipal and civic buildings. An example of this utilization

might be art lessons which are conducted in the Philadelphia Art Museum, science classes in the Franklin Institute, social studies classes in the City Hall or Independence Hall and commercial classes conducted in the Bell Telephone Building. At present, there are four school communities under the Parkway Program, all of which use community and/or civic facilities solely to house the instructional program.

The School District of Philadelphia has also investigated educational parks and educational clusters. Four such clusters are currently being developed. The North Broad Street cluster is a linear corridor of education incorporating several public schools with Temple University and utilizing some of the commercial facilities along North Broad Street. Another area is the Awbury Nolan Tract in the Germantown area, in which a group of middle and high schools will be located under one umbrella of administration. Two other areas, the 29th and Lehigh area in North Philadelphia and Eastwick in Southwest Philadelphia also incorporate a modified educational parks approach. Just a few advantages of these clusters are the increased possibility of racial integration, the better utilization of facilities, the non-repetition of specialized educational facilities, and better utilization of the few available large sites. Urban areas are notorious for their lack of large sites. When a large site is available, perhaps a better use of the site would be to cluster several educational facilities on this one site, rather than taking the approach of developing a large site for one school which necessitates taking large numbers of houses or taxable commercial property for an educational park.

A unique school-community project has been developed in the Mantua area of Philadelphia. The School District has funded a study of dispersed school facilities. This study was conducted by community agencies, namely the Young Great

Society and the Mantua Community Planners. The concept of a mini-school or a small school was thoroughly investigated by these community agencies and the resultant study was presented to the School District for implementation. The mini-school project has rather strong implications for urban school planning and will have a strong impact in the future. Under this study, facilities of a middle school for students in grades five through eight were dispersed throughout the neighborhood on small sites. Not only has there been the advantages of community participation in this project, but also there have been program advantages. The development of mini-schools also capitalizes upon other advantages such as the availability of several small sites as opposed to one large site, the small manageable instructional groups, the breakdown of the gang syndrome which is established at very early ages and the close identification of the faculty with a small group of students. This project has also had a tremendous impact upon the general improvement of the community. Renewal efforts have been stimulated by various community groups as a result of this project.

Another significant school-community project has been the development of community schools. These projects have been a cooperative effort between the School District and various community groups. Presently, there are four community schools in the City of Philadelphia. Perhaps the best example is the Hartranft School. This school houses a complete educational program for grades K-6, and also houses various social and community functions. The development of this school was a result of cooperative efforts between the School District, Recreation Department of the city, the local parochial school, and various community agencies. Parochial students attend this community school on a shared time instructional program, and then return to their own facility located on the same site. Future additions to this school will include a swimming pool, child care center, teenage center, medical

and dental clinics, and a senior citizens facility. Again, the secret to the success of this program has been the joint efforts of School District and community and the committed phasing approach.

The local parochial schools will also cooperate with the School District in another project in the Southwestern section of Philadelphia in the Pepper Middle School. Approximately 400 full-time rotating students from the adjacent parochial school will attend the Pepper Middle School. Over a year, approximately 800 students will be served under this arrangement. Additionally, the parochial school students utilize the vocational and technical school facilities located in the city. There are over 800 part-time parochial students attending the four public vocational-technical schools. Cooperation between parochial and public school personnel has made these highly specialized facilities available to all students. Additionally, community planning which includes the crafts and unions has developed these vocational-technical schools to serve the city.

Another thrust of the Capital Improvement Program of the City of Philadelphia is the space stretching phase. Under this program, the School District utilizes commercial and industrial property either by converting the space to educational facilities or by housing educational programs in existing commercial property. An example of the latter would be the already mentioned Parkway Program, which houses its program in existing commercial, civic and industrial property without conversion. An example of the conversion of commercial and industrial property would be the Pennsylvania Advancement School. This school is located in a former factory building at 5th and Luzerne Streets. This school presently houses approximately 500 students in an experimental program. When complete, the building will be an innovative center which will house over 1,000 students. This is an imaginative use of factory space and was developed by a cooperative effort between

the School District and other agencies. The Educational Facilities Laboratory cooperated with the School District in a study entitled Space Is Where You Find It. This study tells of the efforts of the School District in converting factory space into educational space and describes a scientific method of determining whether it is financially feasible to adapt specific buildings. In a time when bond issues are rejected at the polls, it is often necessary to investigate alternatives to house the students in acceptable educational facilities. One possibility that has been initially investigated by the School District of Philadelphia is the lease-purchase method for providing educational facilities. Under this proposal, private contractors or non-profit organizations secure the financing for the school, construct the school using specifications developed by the School District, and then lease the property to the school on a lease-purchase basis. Under this proposal, there could be community ownership of property until such time as the School District exercised their purchase options. It is our contention, however, that this proposal might be a last resort to the housing of the educational program, at least in the City of Philadelphia. Although there are some advantages to it, investigations have revealed that the cost would be greater than through the ordinary channels of bond issues and construction by the School District.

I have mentioned several ways in which I feel the School District is implementing the principle of community participation in the planning and construction of new school facilities. Many of these are in operation in other school districts. I feel, however, that we have developed a rather comprehensive approach. Basic to this approach has been a firm commitment on the part of the Board of Education and the employees of the School District that the community will be involved in the development of not only the educational program but also the planning for the new school facilities to house the program. To accomplish this basic principle,

it is necessary to thoroughly involve the community in a realistic manner. Perhaps the best way of explaining this would be to take a leaf from the charrette approach in that we give the community the tools and let them help in the decision making process by intensive participation. But before this takes place, there must be a redistribution of power. Just as there is a concept of black power, white power and student power - so there is a concept of community power. To fully capitalize upon community power and to obtain community support, we must redistribute power downwards. We must give power to those people below the top echelon. The power must be sifted down to the rank and file of the community so that the community power can achieve the desires and the needs of each community. Community power is stifled when it is concentrated at the top and the sincere and legitimate needs of the urban individual are blunted when a few people hold this power. I am absolutely convinced that a more open, progressive community can be developed by a redistribution of decision making power to the community tempered by the clearly defined responsibilities of the professionals and Boards of Education.